DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 347 212 UD 026 727

TITLE	Making Big High Schools Smaller. A Review of the Implementation of the House Plan in New York City's Most Troubled High Schools.
INSTITUTION	Bank Street Coll. of Education, New York, N.Y.; Public Education Association, New York, N.Y.
SPONS AGENCY	Carnegie Corp. of New York, N.Y.
PUB DATE	Jan 89
NOTE	41p.; Also sponsored by the Bruner Foundation.
PUB TYPE	Reports - Evaluative/Feasibility (142)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Dropout Prevention; *Dropout Programs; Educational Facilities Improvement; *Grade 9; *High Schools; *House Plan; Program Evaluation; *Program Implementation; School Organization; School Size; *Small Schools; Urban Areas; Urban Schools
IDENTIFIERS	Attendance Improvement Plan; Dropout Prevention Program; *New York City Board of Education

ABSTRACT

This interim report evaluates the implementation of the "House Plan," a plan to create small personalized schools within the 110 large comprehensive high schools in New York (New York) by subdividing all ninth grades into separate units. This evaluation covers only the 37 "dropout prevention" high schools which had been previously identified as most in need of school-wide reform. Telephone surveys were used to determine the characteristics of the schools' plans. Five schools, whose plans seemed most promising, were selected for close observation. Brief overviews of each of the five plans are included. Key criticisms included the following: (1) planning was neither well-supported nor coordinated with other school improvement initiatives; (2) few schools allowed for student interest, student choice, or heterogeneous grouping; (3) traditional class schedules were maintained; (4) staffing was inadequate; (5) there was little administrative adaptation or support; (6) provision of extracurricular activities was uneven; (7) space was inadequate; and (8) no funding was provided. Recommendations for improvement are included. A table illustrating the characteristics of the House Plan in the five selected high schools and a table illustrating the plan's key organizational features are included. The appendices comprise a list of the "dropout prevention" high schools 1987-88, and a description of the affective and organizational characteristics of the ideal "House." A list of 12 references is appended. (FMW)

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Making Big High Schools Smaller

A Review of the Implementation of the House Plan in New York City's Most Troubled High Schools

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This research project was generously funded by the Carnegie Corporation of New York.

The analysis and conclusions contained in this report are those of the Public Education Association and Bank Street College of Education and are not necessarily shared by the granting foundation.

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DIVISION OF RESEARCH, DEMONSTRATION AND POLICY

January 23, 1989

Dear Colleague:

Under grants provided by the Carnegie Corporation of New York and the Bruner Foundation the Public Education Association and Bank Street College of Education have undertaken a two-year study of New York City's ninth grade house plans. "Making Big High Schools Smaller" is an interim report on the first year of research and analysis.

PEA and Bank Street monitored implementation of the house plan in thirty-seven of the high schools which established such plans. Of these, five, whose plans seemed most promising, were chosen for close observation by a team of Bank Street researchers. An overview of these five schools is presented in our report. Simultaneously, PEA staff examined the high school division's implementation efforts.

PEA and Bank Street have long recognized that the issue of large school size is a contributing factor to the problems present in New York City's most troubled high schools. Our studies of dropout prevention, at-risk student populations, and alternative education identified the issue of school size as critical in addressing the needs of the students involved. In 1987, when the Board of Education initiated the ninth grade house plans, PEA and Bank Street seized the opportunity to bring the issue of school size to the forefront of the discussions on secondary education in New York City.

We commend the Board of Education on its initiation of the house plan in New York City. In addition, we are very grateful to the students, teachers, and administrators at the schools who participated in our study and to the staff and administrators of the Board of Education who provided us with information and assistance. It is our hope at PEA and Bank Street that the use of house plans as a means to "downsize" the city's overlarge, overburdened high schools will receive the attention and priority it deserves. We invite members of the educational advocacy and policymaking community to join us in this effort.

Sincerely,

Jeanne Silver Frankl
Executive Director
Public Education Association

Joseph Shenker
President
Bank Street College

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In September 1987, the New York City Board of Education announced an initiative that offered the beginning of a solution to the problem of providing small schools within an existing stock of large comprehensive high schools: The "House Plan." Its mandate to subdivide all ninth grades into separate units provided the opportunity to personalize the school experience, gaining the advantages of a small school while addressing the academic and social needs of entering high school students.

The Public Education Association and Bank Street College of Education undertook a year-long observation of the house plans as they were being designed and put in place. Our study of selected high schools revealed many encouraging results; however, we also noted problems with some aspects of the implementation of the house plan. We present a snapshot of the house plans in our report in order to suggest ways to support their progress toward full implementation as they provide a direct, immediate response to the problems of the troubled high schools. Our review also includes recommendations based, in part, on the following key findings:

PLANNING

- The house plan initiative was not accompanied by adequate resources or technical assistance.
- Most schools did not coordinate planning for the school's house plan with dropout prevention and CSIP (Comprehensive School Improvement Plan). These planning teams each operated independently.

GROUPING OF STUDENTS

- Too few schools based their houses on student interest, allowed student choice, or formed heterogeneous groups.
- Funding patterns rather than educational vision determined size and focus of houses. This resulted in inequities across houses.

BLOCK PROGRAMMING OF CLASSES

- High schools failed to change the traditional class schedule of the ninth grade students.

PERMANENT STAFF

- Houses did not have staff--teachers, administrators, guidance personnel, and support staff--working solely within one house.
- A deliberate attempt was made to organize guidance personnel around each house, but due to limited personnel and categorical program restrictions some houses had little or no special support staff.
- The UFT (United Federation of Teachers) contract governing teachers had provisions that can work for or against the house plan.

ADMINISTRATIVE STRUCTURE

- Schools did not adapt their administration to the house plan.
- Teachers received little assistance in learning how to work together in the house unit.

EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

- High schools made uneven attempts to provide extracurricular activities for each house.

PHYSICAL SPACE

- Schools were not provided necessary assistance to establish separate, exclusive space for each house group.
- Overcrowding at high schools worked against the house plan.

FUNDING

- Schools were not provided with funding to institute a house plan.
- High schools will need additional funding, beyond their current regular high school allocation allotment and categorical funds, to effectively implement a schoolwide house plan.

THE NEED FOR SMALL SCHOOLS

A growing number of practitioners and researchers have concluded that smaller, more intimate learning environments are critical to solving the problems that face urban schools. Large, impersonal academic comprehensive high schools, historically the norm for educating teenagers, have become dysfunctional for today's high school students. According to a recent report of the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching:

> "Most city schools are too big, and anonymity among students is a pervasive problem. There is a feeling of isolation among teenagers at the very time their need for belonging is most intense. Overcoming anonymity - creating a setting in which every student is known personally by an adult - is one of the most compelling obligations urban schools confront."(3) (Number notes reference).

Most New York City high schools have 2000 to 5000 students; they are incapable of providing a sense of community and caring relationships. Disadvantaged students, who often comprise the majority in these schools, suffer most.

These students might be from new immigrant families, often they live in poverty and are either being raised in a struggling single parent family, or by two working parents. These conditions undermine the time and energy families have to interact. If families have little time for their children, they have even less for the schools. And even parents who are not new to the culture can be intimidated by the formidable size and imposing institutional quality of the typical urban high school. Their contact with the school requires not a little courage and persistence.

Large urban schools have an equally negative effect on teachers. They tend to be understaffed, and teachers routinely have larger class loads than they can handle comfortably. But even in more manageable situations, teachers face five classes a day, up to one hundred seventy-five students a day, with whom they meet for one forty-minute class period. Under such conditions, teachers are hard pressed to examine student work thoroughly, let alone adapt curriculum or methods to reach every one of them. And, although teachers recognize their own students, in large urban schools, they do not know most of the others they see in the halls or cafeteria.

For today's teachers, who are reasserting their professionalism and calling for greater roles in decisionmaking, the large school presents still another problem: a large student body demands a large faculty. Their numbers guarantee a greater degree of hierarchy, with administration separated from faculty. Shared administration and decisionmaking become unwieldy, if practiced at all.

Teachers as well as students feel threatened in the unsafe environment of large schools. The body of research that supports smaller schools for urban youngsters shows that student violence occurs more frequently in large schools. Equally compelling is the fact that many of the recent violent incidents in New York City schools have been caused by intruders. It seems obvious that the ability to recognize a stranger, possible in smaller settings, is an effective security measure.

Yet many educators continue to have faith in the premise of the comprehensive high school because its size and structure allow a wide variety of electives, school teams and extracurricular activities. For some students, these dimensions of schooling are the connections that keep them attending and achieving in school. But urban researchers have also shown that for the needy, underachieving student, electives are largely irrelevant.

In a smaller setting, teachers can offer variations on curriculum that might be more compelling for the student than a pre-packaged elective. While a large variety of electives is not available in a small school, what is available is a greater opportunity for students to help shape what they study.

Furthermore, in large schools students tend to avoid teams and activities because they feel anonymous and unwelcome among so many students, and perhaps less successful. In a small school, all students can get a chance to participate in extracurricular and team efforts, simply because each individual is needed in a small school.

In June 1987, the New York City Commission on the Year 2000 recommended that City's schools be smaller. It identified the zoned academic comprehensive high schools as priority targets for reduced size because of their high dropout rates. The 1988-89 capital budget of the Board of Education calls for high schools of 2000 students, a significant change from the 1960's and 1970's when new high schools were planned for 4000 students.

However, according to research, 2000 students is not small enough.(6,7) Leading educator James I. Goodlad, on the basis of

an in-depth national study, finds it difficult to justify junior and senior high schools "of more than 500 to 600 students."(7) From our review of research on at-risk students and school size, and interviews and observations in New York City high schools, we have concluded that small size and the ability to personalize academic offerings are critical components of success for the majority of students attending high school today; we support high schools of 500 to 1000 students.

The Board of Education's immediate and most important challenge is to enable students to complete high school. Addressing the largeness of our existing high schools and building smaller high schools in the future constitute major steps toward the goal of dropout prevention and comprehensive school improvement.

THE HOUSE PLAN AS SOLUTION TO OVERLARGE SCHOOLS

The policy direction may be clear, but in New York City, the problem remains: how to provide small schools in a city with an existing stock of large academic comprehensive high schools. In September 1987, the New York City Board of Education announced an initiative that offered a solution -- the house plan. This mandate subdivided all high school 9th grades into smaller units providing the opportunity to personalize the school experience, thus gaining the advantages of a small school while addressing the academic and social needs of entering high school students. The house plan, now being extended to encompass all grade levels in many schools, has the potential to serve as the centerpiece of needed restructuring at the high school level.

In a model house plan, students, teachers, administrators, guidance personnel, support staff, and the school building itself are reorganized. Everyone becomes a member of a smaller group with which s/he can identify and in which each individual is needed. For example, a student may become one of 500 students rather than one of 3000 students; a teacher, one of 20 rather than 160. Ideally, students take all or the majority of their classes within their house -- a group to which they belong by choice, not academic ability. Likewise, teachers, administrators, and support staff are organized around a single house.

The goal of the house plan is not merely to subdivide students, but to create an environment in which students and school personnel feel secure and, by interacting over time, get to know each other well. In a fully operational plan, houses would have designated separate locations within the school building. Each house would contain classrooms, guidance rooms, library and resource areas, and administrative offices.

The house plan is not a new or untried tool for organizing a school into smaller units. It has been used as an antidote to the school and school district consolidation trend begun in the 1960's that produced the current norm of large academic comprehensive high schools. Ironically, the growth in the size of high schools is attributed in part to the well-respected educator, James Conant, who advocated that a senior class needed as many as (now--as few as) 100 students to support a desired level of variety of curricular offerings.(5)

In the 1970's, the New York City Board of Education pursued a wide range of reforms aimed at creating smaller organizational units within schools. In 1972, Haaren High School reorganized itself into 10 "mini schools" through the combined efforts of the Board of Education, the Urban Coalition, a few large corporations, students, faculty, and parents. The small unit approach, however, was brought to an abrupt halt by the City's fiscal crisis in the last half of the decade.

Today house plans are operating in high schools in Greenwich, Connecticut, and Boston. In Rochester, New York, a system wide reform effort included house plan organization for its high schools. In New York City, a new school, Central Park East Secondary School, organized itself on a house plan model even though it expects to remain small in size. And in Brooklyn, Erasmus Hall, the city's oldest and one of its largest high schools, has adopted the house plan as its organizational model.

The following chapters discuss the Public Education Association's and Bank Street College of Education's (PEA/Bank Street) year-long examination of the house plans as they were being designed and put in place. Because they provide a direct, immediate response to the problems of the troubled high schools, we present this snapshot of the houseplans in order to suggest ways to support their progress toward full implementation.

THE FIRST YEAR OF THE HOUSE PLAN IN NEW YORK CITY

The house plan was mandated in 1986-1987 by the division of High Schools for all incoming grades (ninth, and/or tenth) and was to be in place by the fall of 1987. Although it was to be established in all 110 high schools, PEA/Bank Street chose to monitor the 37 dropout prevention schools (schools with either the DPP-Dropout Prevention Program or the AIDP-Attendance Improvement Dropout Prevention Program, see Appendix A) which we had identified as most in need of schoolwide reform. None of these schools meet the statewide standards for attendance or achievement and all are attended by majorities or near majorities of Black and Hispanic students whose families fall below the federal poverty line.

Staff from PEA/Bank Street used telephone surveys to determine the characteristics of schools' house plans. Overall our review showed great variation in house plan structure among the 37 surveyed schools and the degree to which the plans were implemented. Of these schools, five, whose plans seemed most promising, were chosen for close observation. Two of these schools are located in Brooklyn, two in the Bronx and one in Manhattan. They are given pseudonyms to guarantee confidentiality.

In lengthy site visits staff interviewed administrators, teachers, and students, administered questionnaires, and observed students as they travelled through the school day. Table One provides a quick reference to the key features of the five schools' house plans; a brief overview follows.

House Table 1: Characteristics of the House Plan in Five Selected High Schools

SCHOOLS / FEATURES	Brooklyn Small	Bronx Small	Manhattan	Brooklyn Large	Bronx Large
Type	Extended homeroom with dept/vocational theme.	Homeroom with extracurricular/vocational activities.	Programs with support staff.	Dept/programs with support staff.	Programs with support staff.
Structure	17 9th grade houses of 34 students meet for 2-3 periods with the same teachers; 1 is a house period.	6 9th grade houses of 20-50 students meet for one house period.	7 houses of 150-1050 some of which include upper grades; house students have some courses together.	4 9th grade houses of 80-120 students have some courses together.	Eleven houses of 30-450 some of which include upper grades; house students have some courses together.
Curriculum	Protracted classroom work in subject area. House period curriculum designed to foster adjustment.	Vocational exploration along theme lines.	Program area courses, e.g., remedial math, business.	Varies from motivational theme to integrated curriculum on nuclear energy.	Program area courses, e.g., remedial math, computer literacy.
Extracurriculars	Class outings, e.g., film, museum.	Strong emphasis on 9th grade orientation, house sports competitions, inter-house newsletter, house trips along theme lines.	Attendance/achievement awards, house newsletters.	9th grade orientation, house outings, speakers, classwork related to subject area/house specific.	House publications, peer tutoring, performances.
Staffing	House teacher, counselor.	House teacher.	Coordinator, counselor, deans, family assts, teachers for some houses.	AP, coordinator, counselor, family asst, a few core subject teachers.	Coordinator, counselor, family asst, teachers for some houses.
House Management	Redesign expert convenes house coordinators in two groups weekly.	AP convenes house coordinators often.	AP convenes house coordinators. Coordinators and support staff interact informally in offices.	AP assigned to each house meets with the house coordinator, support staff and some core teachers often.	AP monitors houses. House coordinators meet with their staff to a varying extent across houses.
Physical Facility	None.	None.	House office/center for the coordinator, counselor and family asst for some houses.	Dept office used by AP and coordinator. Core classes located in one area.	House office/center used by coordinator, teachers, counselors.

OVERVIEW

Observations of the five high schools studied show a piecemeal implementation of the house plan features for reasons which are discussed in the findings. As a group, however, the schools adopted many of the innovations that are associated with the houseplan. Most of them began to realize some of the potential for personalizing a school. The impact was discerned in the enthusiasm with which staffs and students undertook new activities and reported improvement in relationships of students with peers and staffs.

Reflecting the citywide variation in house plan structure, the five closely-studied schools also showed variation. "Brooklyn Small" and "Bronx Small" represent efforts to restructure 9th grade students' days in order to increase their interaction with one or two staff members; the house unit is a single classroom. In the other three schools, much larger numbers of students, usually several official classes, are assigned to a house, along with a larger complement of staff.

In "Brooklyn Small" all entering 9th graders are blocked into at least two, sometimes three, classes with the same teacher. There are 17 such houses, with one guidance counselor assigned to every two houses. Houses have approximately 34 students each. Each house has a curricular theme based on the teacher's department affiliation. In weekly meetings of house teachers, convened in two groups by the coordinator, teachers collaborate on decisions about house administration and curriculum. House extracurricular trips help to cement student and student-faculty relationships.

In "Bronx Small," 9th graders were assigned on the basis of choice to three houses which meet one period each day to engage in extra-curricular activities related to vocational interest. Ninth grade repeaters, special education, and bilingual students were assigned to three other houses, respectively. The extracurricular activities, scheduled during the class day, provided students a chance to gain experience with the careers about which they were learning. Like the house classes in "Brooklyn Small," these periods provided students with an oasis in a school day otherwise consisting of a fast-paced, monotonous class schedule.

"Manhattan," "Brooklyn Large," and "Bronx Large" High Schools tried to subdivide the whole school into house units. "Manhattan" had 7 houses of 150 to 1000 students with a house coordinator and support staff attached to each house. Some

houses extended to the 12th grade, others are to be extended year by year. Some of the students had classes together in subject areas such as math or business. Coordinators interacted freely with support staff in the house office which became the physical center for the some of the houses. "Bronx Large" and "Brooklyn Large" also used a staff house office as the physical locus for the house. In "Brooklyn Large" the core house classes were located in one physical area.

STAFFING

"Manhattan," "Brooklyn Large," and "Bronx Large" established house plans that are close to what the literature on house plans describes with students and support staff organized around each house. Yet because the teachers have not been exclusively assigned to the houses and the students' schedules were not adjusted to reinforce identity with their house, the boundaries of the houses were invisible to students; students' assignment to a house made little difference in their day to day routines and experience. This problem is largely created by the need to avoid assigning teachers exclusively to a single grade level. In the schools that plan to extend houses through all the grades, this obstacle to full staffing will eventually be eliminated and the students will be able to take courses from a constant group of teachers throughout their high school years. Of course, students' schedules will also have to be changed.

CURRICULUM

Increased student-teacher interaction is not the only benefit anticipated from house plan organization. Another equally important effect is curriculum coherence. In the typical high school, students' courses bear no relationship to one another so that they rarely have the opportunity to build on lessons learned in one course in another. Consequently, efforts to lengthen periods, reduce the number of courses required, block classes and integrate curricula have the potential for making school more coherent. A small house unit also makes it possible for teachers and administrators to adjust curriculum to individual needs.

The house plans of the five schools we studied called for a course curriculum or theme for each house, some dictated by the academic or vocational program. In two, however, the goal was to integrate the curricula of two or more core courses. The most successful example was in the science house at "Brooklyn Large" where the theme of nuclear energy was threaded through

science, social studies, and English and culminated in the showing of a popular film on the topic. While the other schools had house themes, they were discreet from the rest of the subject classes the students attended.

The house plan structure produced other curricula enhancements. At "Bronx Small" for instance, the house activities were coordinated across houses so that the expertise of staff in one house could be shared with other house. For example, the business house coordinator held weekly sessions with the students from other houses to produce an inter-house newsletter. At "Brooklyn Small", a curriculum was designed to help students maximize their adjustment to a new school and community environment. Unfortunately, since the house period was blocked together with the academic course, the students often spent the house period completing subject material rather than studying the house curriculum. As noted above, however, the blocked schedule provided a positive environment in and of itself.

CATEGORICAL PROGRAMS AND THE HOUSE PLAN

A disappointing outcome of the current house system is the tendency of the schools to develop house plans around existing programs. This is understandable given the restrictions on funds targeted to special populations, however, it results in inequities of resources available to the houses. This type of grouping tends to isolate populations rather than widening the experience of the students through interaction with others.

The dropout-prone population is an example. At-risk students were either grouped together in a dropout prevention house or left out of the house plan system altogether. If, as anticipated, the support system of a house plan can make the services of guidance and other attendance personnel more efficient, the intensive services required by this population as well as by the generally needy high school population will be lessened. In the meantime, schools must solve the problem of managing targeted resources within the context of a broadened academic and social environment.

CONCLUSIONS

Our 37-school survey and five case studies indicated that, in their first year under the mandate, schools incorporated only some of the elements the literature on house plans claims are necessary for successful house plans, and these were only

partially implemented. This is not surprising, considering the lack of technical assistance and resources available to the schools.

Conversely, researchers noted an immediate, positive impact on student and teacher esprit de corps, enthusiasm, and improved relationships in some of the schools. Future positive outcomes are highly likely if the house plan initiative is encouraged to evolve toward the model that has proven effective elsewhere.

In the following chapters we present more specific findings of the research and recommendations for overcoming obstacles that currently hamper the growth of the house plan.

KEY FINDINGS

As a result of an extensive review of earlier research on school size and house plans, including the Division of High Schools' Ideal House Memorandum (1987), and bolstered by our intensive case studies of five high schools' house plans, we developed a list of house plan features with significant potential for improving the social and academic climate of a school:

* School level planning
* Students grouped by interest and across grades
* Block programming of students
* Permanent contingent of staff linked to each house
* House administrative structure based on teacher participation
* House extracurricular activities
* Separate physical facilities for each house

In order to identify the areas of success and obstacles to implementing the house plan, we organized our findings around these key elements. In addition, Table Two outlines these key organizational features.

House Table 2: Key Organizational Features of the House Plan

KEY ORGANIZATIONAL FEATURES OF THE HOUSE PLAN	IMMEDIATE BENEFITS TO STAFF AND STUDENTS	LONG-TERM OUTCOMES FOR STAFF AND STUDENTS
A small group of 9th-12th grade students who are blocked together for all school activities and normally remain in the same house across grades.	Enhanced staff-student interaction.	Improved student discipline.
A permanent contingent of staff linked to the house unit.	Enhanced extracurricular participation.	Heightened student self-esteem.
Physical facilities which allow students to take most courses and meet with staff in close geographic proximity.	More favorable attitudes toward school.	Improved student attendance.
A management mechanism which permits house staff to participate in decision-making governing the house; a c ommon free period for staff to facilitate co-management.	Increased teacher involvement in decision-making.	Improved school climate.
Cocurricular and extracurricular activities.	Increased staff collegiality.	Higher rate of job satisfaction/morale.
Heterogenous groups of students.		

PLANNING

1. THE HOUSE PLAN INITIATIVE WAS NOT ACCOMPANIED BY ADEQUATE RESOURCES OR TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE.

The high schools did not receive specific funding or technical expertise to implement the house plan. This is in sharp contrast to the resources provided schools designated "redesign" schools, the system's other initiative to create schoolwide change. For that initiative, the Board maintains a central office and assigns staff to work with individual schools.

Unlike redesign, the house plan is established with existing students and staff and does not depend for its success on a newly-selected population. Yet the house plan is at least as far reaching in its consequences and has even more potential to alleviate negative conditions in large schools.

The 37 dropout prevention high schools attempting to implement the house plan did not receive the level of assistance that the redesign schools do. There is no office at the Board of Education or in the high school superintendents' offices to facilitate the house plan. Instead, limited orientation sessions were held to discuss the house plan, and limited materials, including the Ideal House Memorandum, were distributed, see Appendix B.

High schools were required to develop a house plan and submit it to the Superintendent for Instruction by May 1987. This deadline was very late in the school year. There was no time for either high school superintendents or the high school division to review the plans and help schools make any needed changes. Schools embarked on what the High Schools Division called the biggest organizational change in any school system in recent years with inadequate planning and review.

As a result, the house plan was not recognized for what it is -- the foundation for restructuring high schools. School staff made only limited attempts to organize education programs and services around the houses. The consequences were clear; their first year house plans fell far short of the goal to provide a smaller, more personal environment.

Although no school had implemented a fully developed house plan during the first year, there were two schools in our in-depth field study that had strongly developed key elements such as block programming (multiple or combined class periods).

Coincidentally, at these schools there were Board of Education personnel that had previously been given the specific charge to facilitate a school redesign (without closing the school).

2. MOST SCHOOLS DID NOT COORDINATE PLANNING FOR THE SCHOOL'S HOUSE PLAN WITH DROPOUT PREVENTION AND CSIP (Comprehensive School Improvement Plan). THESE PLANNING TEAMS EACH OPERATED INDEPENDENTLY.

High schools were not required to develop a house plan for the 1987-88 school year in conjunction with their school's annual Comprehensive School Improvement Plan (CSIP). This plan is developed by a teacher-administrator-parent committee in order to address the low achievement and attendance of schools that failed to meet minimum standards. For the second year of the house plan, high schools were instructed to combine the planning. In schools with AIDP programs (Attendance Improvement Dropout Prevention) a few included their house plan as a component of dropout prevention as it is now an allowable activity under AIDP guidelines.

Unfortunately, the house plan is not recognized as the centerpiece of the CSIP plan. Schools continue to focus their school improvement plans on increasing reading and attendance levels for specific students within an unchanged school environment. However, as the benefits of the house plan organization become more obvious, the relationship between CSIP goals and the house plan should evolve.

GROUPING OF STUDENTS

3. TOO FEW SCHOOLS BASED THEIR HOUSES ON STUDENT INTEREST, ALLOWED STUDENT CHOICE, OR FORMED HETEROGENEOUS GROUPS.

Many researchers recommend that a house plan be a heterogeneous group of students to avoid the educational limitations and onus of tracking. Some also urge that such houses be organized around themes to capture student interest and provide options and choice. In almost every high school reviewed, students were not allowed to choose their house, and all students continued to be tracked according to ability.

For example, we found schools that had transformed existing college-bound, bilingual, and dropout prevention programs into

houses. The groups were slightly altered or renamed to serve as a house. Because of this arrangement, schools had houses that varied widely in enrollment. A college-bound house might have 100 students, a bilingual house 400 students, and a vocational house 150 students.

Table Three outlines the types of houses created in the 37 high schools.

Table Three
Types of Houses Created in the
37 Dropout Prevention High Schools

HOUSE	TOTAL
Vocational Training	69
Academic Subject	29
Basic Skills	27
Bilingual	23
Advanced Academic	18
Dropout Prevention	15
Creative Arts	11
Pre-College	8
High School Adjustment	4
Career Development	4
Alternative Learning	2

4. FUNDING PATTERNS RATHER THAN EDUCATIONAL VISION DETERMINED SIZE AND FOCUS OF HOUSES. THIS RESULTED IN INEQUITIES ACROSS HOUSES.

Because they believed they had no other options or did not know how to integrate resources, schools continued to group students based on categorical funding. This meant that some houses, based on preexisting programs such as "bilingual" or "college-bound", had resources not available to other houses. It also prevented pooling of resources to enrich the programs. For example, under college bound guidelines, a program might have had its own guidance counselors or family assistants because it had funding specifically for that purpose. The guidelines also determined the number of students that could be in a program at one time (for example 150 dropout prone students under AIDP.) If schools had had more technical assistance, these resources might have been turned to an advantage.

BLOCK PROGRAMMING OF CLASSES

5. HIGH SCHOOLS FAILED TO CHANGE THE TRADITIONAL CLASS SCHEDULE OF THE NINTH GRADE STUDENTS.

Block programming is a key element of a house plan because it lengthens the class time that the same students and teachers have to interact with each other. It also allows for teaching strategies beyond the stifling lecture format that is pervasive in most high schools.

Under the current UFT teaching contract, a high school teacher teaches five periods a day and sees up to 175 students per day. As a result of this scheduling, students rightly believe that their teachers do not know them. In fact, teachers can barely recognize most students. In addition, the class schedule for a high school student is a rigid, monotonous one and learning is fragmented. Students take perhaps six different classes, and each class period is about 40 minutes in length. Between each class period students change classrooms, subjects, teachers, and fellow students.

Under the traditional schedule, the same group of students does not stay together for long class periods nor participate together in several different classes. They cannot develop the rapport with each other that might help hold them in school. Neither can they take advantage of each other's academic strengths under the current format. There is little time to ask a classmate for help on an assignment or to witness a classmate's ability in another subject.

A few high schools attempted to modify the traditional programming in a limited way. This was accomplished either by extending a subject area class such as English for two periods, by creating a new "house" class such as an elective, or by treating the entire house of 400 students as a unit, scheduling all students to their regular classes with other members of this group.

Even in these schools, students were still forced back into the mainstream of the school for the other classes. Their house experience was a only a minor reprieve from the rest of their school day. Yet these schools were more successful than the others which claimed it was extremely difficult, if not impossible, to program classes in this manner.

PERMANENT STAFF

6. HOUSES DID NOT HAVE STAFF -- TEACHERS, ADMINISTRATORS, GUIDANCE PERSONNEL, AND SUPPORT STAFF -- WORKING SOLELY WITHIN ONE HOUSE.

In a house plan, students are not the only school people who become members of a particular house. Teachers, administrators, guidance personnel, and support staff who are assigned full time to a particular house are critical elements in achieving the benefits of a small school via the house plan. Not only does this arrangement foster interaction among students and teachers, it also allows for increased decisionmaking, curriculum planning and guidance at the house level. But schools were unable to accomplish this goal because:

* They could not identify teachers who were willing to teach ninth graders exclusively.
* Some of the house classes were limited to two or three periods a day. To fill out their required five period day, the teachers had to teach upper grades or in more than one house.
* There were not enough guidance personnel to allocate separate support to every house.
* Most administrators (assistant principals for example) chose to retain their affiliation with their subject department rather than with the house they supervised and were uncertain for whom they were responsible -- their department teachers or house teachers.
* Teachers were uncertain as to whether they belonged to a department or a house.

7. A DELIBERATE ATTEMPT WAS MADE TO ORGANIZE GUIDANCE PERSONNEL AROUND EACH HOUSE, BUT DUE TO LIMITED PERSONNEL AND CATEGORICAL PROGRAM RESTRICTIONS, SOME HOUSES HAD LITTLE OR NO SPECIAL SUPPORT STAFF.

Most schools identified guidance personnel -- guidance counselors, paraprofessionals, and family assistants -- as the first personnel they tried to attach to a particular house. Schools with houses that were based on categorical funding (bilingual or dropout prevention) were able to deploy specific personnel to these houses. Other schools, or even other houses within the same schools, either did not have specific people to assign to a house, or assigned several people to be shared among houses.

8. THE UFT (UNITED FEDERATION OF TEACHERS) CONTRACT GOVERNING TEACHERS HAD PROVISIONS THAT CAN WORK FOR OR AGAINST THE HOUSE PLAN.

The current UFT contract governing teachers contains a provision entitled, "School-based Options." Under this provision, school personnel and the principal may agree to modify the existing provisions of the UFT contract concerning class size, teacher rotation, assignments, or classes, teacher schedules and/or rotation of paid coverages for the entire school year.

To be effective, the "School-based Options" provision must be approved on an annual basis by 75% of faculty voting, the Union District Representative, the President of the Union, the appropriate Superintendent, and the Chancellor.

This provision allows school personnel to operate their school under the alternative working conditions often necessary to institute a full house plan.

Of the 37 high schools surveyed, none utilized this option to facilitate the implementation of the house plan. In high schools where there were unusual schedules, teachers volunteered to participate.

However, at the school with the most comprehensive house plan to date, the UFT representative did agree to the alternative arrangements necessary to establish the ninth and tenth grade house plan. It is expected however, that if the house plan is to continue and become rooted in the school, the "School-based Options" provision will have to be invoked. Under such circumstances the faculty has the power to continue or terminate the house plan each year. Thus, while the option provision is a positive addition to the teachers' contract, it may not be adequate to facilitate changes that require long term planning.

ADMINISTRATIVE STRUCTURE

9. SCHOOLS DID NOT ADAPT THEIR ADMINISTRATION TO THE HOUSE PLAN.

As high schools implemented their house plans, none chose to address the decentralization and realignment of administration. The house plans were viewed as separate units, operating

independently, and many administrators viewed house-related work as an uncompensated addition to their regular duties. In addition, there was confusion about the difference between house affiliation and department affiliation. The school which did attempt to adapt administrative relationships to a schoolwide restructuring based on the house plan, ran into some resistance.

10. TEACHERS RECEIVED LITTLE ASSISTANCE IN LEARNING HOW TO WORK TOGETHER IN THE HOUSE UNIT.

The house plan involves a more participatory role for teachers than is currently the case. Instead of being responsible only for their own classes and limited in their involvement in administration, teachers help to coordinate house activities and cooperate in curriculum planning. This arrangement also implies collegiality and cooperation between teachers and administrators, interacting to adapt curriculum and activities to individual needs.

Because of the structure of most of the house plans in the schools studied, there was little opportunity for teachers to work together at the classroom level. As most schools did not change their class scheduling or assign teachers to the ninth grade exclusively, opportunities for teachers to work together remained limited. A common prep period to help facilitate this interaction existed in only a few schools.

Staff development, necessary to establish a new plan, was not given priority, although a few schools did provide limited staff development. With many newer or less experienced teachers teaching in the house plan, the need for staff development becomes even more critical.

EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

11. HIGH SCHOOLS MADE UNEVEN ATTEMPTS TO PROVIDE EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES FOR EACH HOUSE.

One of the means to bind house students together, particularly if they are a heterogeneous group, is extracurricular activities. Unfortunately, when schools created house plans, extracurricular activities were likely to be left out.

In our review we saw some schools that did provide

extracurricular activities for students as a house group. In the one high school that included them in the students' course schedules, the students reported great satisfaction.

Other schools planned trips and speakers. As noted, because some houses were funded more richly than others, extracurriculars were unevenly available.

PHYSICAL SPACE

12. SCHOOLS WERE NOT PROVIDED NECESSARY ASSISTANCE TO ESTABLISH SEPARATE, EXCLUSIVE SPACE FOR EACH HOUSE GROUP.

Although schools were told that an "ideal" house had separate physical space to define its activities, only one school we studied subdivided itself physically, or provided even a separate wing for all the ninth grade houses.

The closest we found to a physical locus was a classroom converted to an administrative/counseling office for a specific house. This enabled administrators affiliated with that house to have a common work area and students to know where to find house personnel. Unfortunately, even where such space was available, it was not available to every house.

The failure to solve the space problem is not surprising in the absence of technical assistance from the Division of School Buildings. Redesigning a high school that dates from fifty years ago or more is a challenging task. And providing access to common facilities such as cafeteria, gym, library, and laboratories adds to the difficulty.

13. OVERCROWDING AT HIGH SCHOOLS WORKED AGAINST THE HOUSE PLAN.

When a school's utilization rate calls for an enrollment level of 3,200 students -- but actually enrolls 3,800 students -- the problems of house plan implementation are further exacerbated. According to the Board of Education, almost all of the 37 high schools we studied are overutilized.

In an effective house, guidance and administrative offices and student reading and work centers, for example, should be located within the house section. Providing space for these activities reduces the amount of available classrooms but classrooms are

already at a premium in overutilized schools. Additional obstacles to sharing space on a house basis are overutilization of the gym, cafeteria, library, and laboratories.

FUNDING

14. SCHOOLS WERE NOT PROVIDED WITH ADEQUATE FUNDING TO INSTITUTE HOUSE PLANS.

Funding provided to create house plans was very limited. All schools received a $3,000 planning grant, and five schools received an additional $10,000 to develop a pilot house plan during Spring 1987.

Other than these grants, schools received no funds exclusively for the house plan. Instead, they had to withdraw funds from several funding allocations. The primary funding source available for implementing a house plan came from a percentage of a school's regular high school allocation. In fact, these house plan funds came from the final phase of a revised funding formula meant to create equity among all high schools.

A total of 127.75 units were available for the ninth grade house plan across 99 high schools. (A unit is equal to an average teacher's salary). A high school received on average 1.3 units for its house plan.

The 37 dropout prevention high schools received 54 of the 127.75 units. The average funding available to the 35 dropout prevention schools (excluding the two alternative high schools) for their house plans were 1.54 units. Even though the need for the house plan is greater in the dropout prevention schools, they received approximately the same limited amount of funding as their non-dropout counterparts.

High schools primarily chose to spend their additional unit(s) on teachers. Some schools created a special house class similar to an elective, others reduced the teaching load of house teachers from five to four classes to allow them time for house administrative work and guidance responsibilities. With such limited funding, however, a school with one additional unit was only able to reduce class loads for at most five teachers.

Consistent with the first year, no funds were provided to schools for the house plan for the 1988-89 school year despite the fact that the mandate now extends the house plan to ninth grade holdovers and tenth graders as well.

15. HIGH SCHOOLS WILL NEED ADDITIONAL FUNDING, BEYOND THEIR CURRENT REGULAR HIGH SCHOOL ALLOCATION ALLOTMENT AND CATEGORICAL FUNDS, TO EFFECTIVELY IMPLEMENT A SCHOOLWIDE HOUSE PLAN.

For schools to achieve as much as they did with such limited funding is commendable. However, developing and implementing a house plan reorganization of a high school requires more than one unit of funding. But, funding for the house plan cannot be subject to unstable funding sources such as categorical programs, division and superintendent discretes, and small add-ons.

High schools will need funds to support the plan they design for their school. Not all schools will require the same level of funding, but all schools should have funds available to them to implement a schoolwide house plan -- not merely portions of it. Thus, funding to enable schools to reorganize into a house plan structure must be a priority item of the High Schools Division. This funding could come from increasing basic support or from other funds earmarked for schools implementing a house plan. And, those schools adopting a house plan organization must be guaranteed funding during the transitional implementation period.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Implementation

1. The Board of Education should confront the issue of large school size as a factor which strongly contributes to students dropping out of school -- especially in the neighborhood zoned high schools. The Board should focus on a plan to reorganize schools into smaller units -- schools within schools or houses -- in the 44 high schools that have dropout prevention programs.

2. High school reorganization should be facilitated at the district level. The five high school superintendents' offices should be provided with the necessary resources -- such as personnel expert in school redesign, staff development, curriculum, and social services for students -- to assist schools in developing and operating a schoolwide house plan. Superintendents should be responsible and accountable for their respective schools house plan implementation.

3. The Division of High Schools and high school districts should develop a schedule of implementation of the house plan in the 44 high schools. A minimum of two high schools should be identified within each district to be the first schools to implement a house plan. All 44 high schools should be able to have house plan organizations within five years. High schools should be allowed to create their house plan with assistance from their district office.

4. If schools determine that a house plan is only feasible when using the school based options provision in the UFT teachers contract, this provision and other contracts governing school employees should be reviewed to determine their effect on a high school's house plan.

General Guidelines for Organization

1. Efforts to facilitate increased interaction between students and teachers should be provided. Students should have fewer different adults and students to interact with during the school day. School personnel should have fewer different colleagues and students to interact with during the school day.

2. Houses should be organized vertically from 9th to 12th grade.

3. Houses should have a permanent, constant staff.

4. Students should not be tracked by academic ability into houses.

5. Students should take all or the majority of their classes within their house.

6. Class scheduling should be changed to allow the same groups of students to study different subjects together. More flexible schedules and longer class periods should be provided.

7. Guidance, class programming, attendance services, security concerns, and extracurricular activities for students should be provided at the house level.

8. Houses should be provided space for their exclusive use and physical facilities which allow students to take most courses and meet with staff in close geographic proximity.

Planning and Development

1. The schoolwide CSIP (Comprehensive School Improvement Plan) planning team should be expanded to include representatives of each house within a high school. Planning teams for dropout prevention and house plans should work with the school's CSIP team.

2. Teachers and administrators need to jointly participate in staff development programs in both the instruction and administrative areas. Both must learn how to jointly manage a house unit.

3. Efforts should be made to organize new teacher training and staff development within houses when appropriate.

4. Teachers should be provided common prep periods to work with other teachers within their house, and regular time to provide guidance support to students.

Funding

1. Funding the reorganization of the 44 dropout prevention high schools into smaller units -- houses -- should be the priority budget concern of the Division of High Schools in the next five fiscal years. Funds should be allocated specifically for planning and implementation.

2. High schools with house plans should receive technical assistance to know how to combine their existing categorical funds such as AIDP, DPP, PCEN, Chapter I, and Title VII to help facilitate their house plans. Any changes needed in these programs' funding restrictions to allow for a house plan should be sought by the Central Board at the city, state, and federal levels.

3. As the Board of Education recognizes that large schools have unique needs, they must simultaneously recognize that these unique needs are not necessarily the same across all large schools. Revisions in the basic support component of the high school allocation formula to improve funding for high schools -- because they are large -- should be allocated to the 44 dropout prevention high schools. New funding should be used to restructure high schools into houses, with the schools most needy of resources phased in first.

4. Funding for high schools converting to houses must be guaranteed during the transitional period.

5. High school house staff and administrators should have the responsibility to allocate their funding with the approval of their high school principal and the CSIP committee.

Capital Plant and Physical Needs

1. High school modernizations scheduled at the zoned high schools should facilitate a house plan -- not the academic comprehensive high school model. The dropout prevention high schools scheduled for renovation and modernizations should be given immediate priority. Their plans should be reviewed to support the house plan.

2. Overutilization is a barrier to any school reform -- including the house plan. The utilization rate of the zoned high schools implementing the house plan needs to be reexamined and adjusted. House plans will add additional space requirements to buildings originally built for a different academic and social program. In particular, zoned high schools need to reduce their school population -- especially their over-the-counter students.

3. The Board of Education currently has a prototype for new school buildings that does not ensure a small school environment; rather, it is designed with several wings for classrooms and separate wings for administrative and guidance offices and special work areas. The Board of Education should review its prototype and revise it to ensure the creation of houses (subschools) which are separate yet complete with accommodations for house-level work areas and administrative and guidance offices. The mere subdivision of a large school, without the needed components, will not ensure the personal school environment that the Board should strive to provide for its students.

4. New York City should not build any more big school buildings -- especially at the high school level. New high schools should have enrollments ranging from 500 to no more than 1000 students and be designed to facilitate a house plan.

5. The Board of Education should seek passage of state legislation which would limit the size of any new high school in New York City to no more than 1000 students and make it a priority of the newly created school construction authority to build only small schools.

APPENDIX A

Listing of High Schools Selected to Participate in the Attendance Improvement/Dropout Prevention (AIDP) or Dropout Prevention Program (DPP) Academic Year 1987-88

Borough	AIDP HIGH SCHOOL	DPP HIGH SCHOOL
Bronx	Evander Childs	Theodore Roosevelt
	James Monroe	South Bronx
	Morris	William H. Taft
	John F. Kennedy	
	DeWitt Clinton	
	Adlai E. Stevenson	
	Christopher Columbus	
	Walton	
	Bronx Regional	
Brooklyn	Lafayette	Bushwick
	Boys and Girls	John Jay
	Sarah J. Hale	Thomas Jefferson
	Erasmus Hall	Prospect Heights
	George Wingate	Eastern District
	Automotive	
Manhattan	Julia Richman	Louis D. Brandeis
	Martin Luther King, Jr.	
	George Washington	
	Park West	
	Washington Irving	
	Seward Park	
	Lower East Side Prep	
Queens	Andrew Jackson	Far Rockaway
	William C. Bryant	
	Franklin K. Lane	
	Springfield Gardens	
Staten Island	Curtis	

APPENDIX B

New York City Board of Education
Division of High Schools Ideal House Memorandum

New York City Board of Education
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Chancellor

Division of High Schools
Stephen E. Phillips
Executive Director (Acting)
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The Ideal House

Because the idea is so new, no school can be expected to have the "ideal house" in place at this point. The closer a school's houses are to the ideal, however, the better results they will have with students. We should all be moving towards "ideal houses."

Affective

1. Students feel that they belong to a house within the school and will identify as house members. They can define the house by theme, interest group, or other common characteristics.
2. Teachers identify with a house of students--not with a department, grade level, or the entire school.
3. Supervisors see the school as a group of houses--not in its entirety or as a collection of departments.

Organization

1. A student has all of his classes within the house, sharing them only with students from the same house. Official class is part of the house program.
2. The house is a 9-12 or 10-12 organization.
3. The school is programmed so that houses have "block time," allowing teachers and supervisors to flexibly schedule students within this time, perhaps on a daily basis.
4. Houses are physical spaces in the school, separated from one another.
5. School personnel are programmed and organized around houses:
   a. each assistant principal is connected to a house; only one AP relates to the teachers in the house.
   b. only one teacher from each subject area is in each house; no teacher is assigned classes outside of the house.
   c. all students in the house share a common guidance counselor; the guidance counselor's sole role is with students in the house.
   d. each house has its own attendance team: paras, coordinator, recorckeepers, outreach personnel.
   e. "grade advisors" are replaced by "house advisors."
   f. comp time positions are assigned by houses (e.g. rather than a .6 COSA for the school, a .2 COSA for each house).
   g. teachers in the house have a common prep period, with guidance counselor and other house personnel available to meet with them.

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